WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An automated method to catch and release a plunger which travels in a production tubing for a well, which method comprises:

sensing arrival of a plunger at a surface catcher chamber and sending a signal to a controller;

sending a signal from said controller to actuate a stem in order to hold said plunger in said surface catcher chamber;

closing a flow line in order to stop fluid flow through said production tubing;

holding said plunger for a predetermined time;

retracting said stem in order to permit said plunger to fall by gravity; and

opening said flow line in order to permit fluid flow therethrough.

2. An automated method to catch and release a plunger as set forth in Claim 1 including sequentially repeating the process.

3. An automated method to catch and release a plunger as set forth in Claim 1 including the additional steps following said closing said flow line of:

sending a signal from said controller to an actuated valve on a chemical launcher;

opening said valve on said chemical launcher, thereby releasing chemical; and

actuating said valve to close the release of chemical.

4. An automated method to catch and release a plunger as set forth in Claim 3 wherein said chemical launcher is in angular relation to said production tubing.

5. An automated method to catch and release a plunger as set forth in Claim 3 wherein said chemical is in the form of solid spheres.

6. An automated method to catch and release a plunger as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said plunger is metallic and wherein a magnetic sensor senses said arrival of said plunger.

7. An automated method to catch and release a plunger as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said steps of actuating said stem and retracting said stem is performed by actuator activated by gas pressure.

8. An automated method to catch and release a plunger as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said stem activates a spring and ball to hold said plunger at the top of said production tubing.

9. An automated method to catch and release a plunger as set forth in Claim 1 wherein closing and opening of said flowline is accomplished by a valve and actuator in communication with said controller.

10. An automated method to catch and release a plunger which travels in a production tubing for a well, which method comprises:

sensing arrival of a plunger at a surface catcher chamber and sending a signal to a controller;

sending a signal from said controller to actuate a stem in order to hold said plunger in said surface catcher chamber;

closing the flowline in order to stop fluid flow through said production tubing;

sending a signal from said controller to an actuated valve on a chemical launcher;

opening said actuated valve on said chemical launcher, thereby releasing chemical;

actuating said valve to close release of chemical;

holding said plunger for a predetermined time;

retracting said stem in order to permit said plunger to fall by gravity; and

opening said flowline in order to permit fluid flow therethrough.

11. An automated method to catch and release a plunger as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said chemical launcher is in angular relation to said production tubing.

12. An automated method to catch and release a plunger as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said chemical is in the form of solid spheres.

13. An automated method to catch and release a plunger as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said chemical is chosen from the group consisting of surfactants, foams, corrosion inhibitors, scale inhibitors, methanol and paraffin solvents and dispersants.

14. An automated catch and release plunger and chemical application apparatus for a production tubing for a well, which apparatus comprises:

a surface plunger catcher at the top of said production tubing having a stem movable in order to hold said plunger in said surface plunger catcher in response to a signal from a controller;

a valve to close or open a flowline in order to stop or open fluid flow through said production tubing in response to signals from said controller; and

a chemical launcher in angular relation to the production tubing wherein a valve actuated by signals from said controller opens said valve to release chemical therefrom and closes said valve to prevent release of chemical therefrom.

15. An automated catch and release plunger and chemical application apparatus as set forth in Claim 14 including a magnetic sensor that senses arrival of said plunger at said surface plunger.

16. An automated catch and release plunger and chemical application apparatus as set forth in Claim 14 wherein said stem is actuated by gas pressure and wherein said stem activates a spring and ball so that said ball blocks the path of said plunger.